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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) Included are case descriptions of two retarded readers whose oral reading scores were two grade levels above placement, a description of a classroom technique that teaches with a 25 to 1 pupil-teacher ratio, and a discussion of the psychosocial implications of differentiating instruction to meet individual needs.

Classroom activities should be adjusted to meet individual needs so that the content of learning is tailored to individual needs; the level of content is adjusted to individual needs; learning speed differs from person to person; and the frequency of response is maximized for each individual so that maximum learning can be expected and children can continuously respond to teaching stimuli.

The self-directed classroom is considered the way to meet individual needs in a large classroom. Individualized instruction involves five major efforts by the teacher: she should operate as a learning specialist by isolating specific operations to be taught; she should develop a core reading program for all pupils in which each can move at his own pace; she should develop self-teaching, self-correcting learning segments, and team learning techniques that increase the learner's role, increase frequency of response, and decrease direct teacher intervention; she should be trained in diagnosis and treatment of learning needs; and she should know the materials available in reading, language arts, mathematics, and science, and should be able to develop new materials to solve new problems.

When individual self instruction or small team learning is practiced, certain desirable psychosocial benefits are obtained in addition to the educational ones: social responsibility, personal responsibility, social-personal development, intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards and satisfactions, positive reinforcements, frustration tolerance, and control of destiny.

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# A PSYCHOLOGY OF TEACHING READING TO INDIVIDUALS

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ED002477

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the cases of Marvin and Bryan, two "homogenized" fifth graders. Educationally speaking, they are "homogeneous" in two respects:

1. Their oral reading scores are two grade levels above placement.
2. They are both retarded readers!

In every other sense, educationally speaking, they are different.

This chapter also describes a classroom technique that teaches to such differences with a 25 to 1 pupil-teacher ratio. Finally, this chapter discusses the psycho-social implications of differentiating instruction to meet individual needs.

## PART ONE: "HOMOGENIZED" KIDS (or WHY WE MUST INDIVIDUALIZE)

Marvin and Bryan were part of a homogeneously grouped reading class matched on IQ, reading grade level, and socio-economic level. Both are actual cases drawn from the author's files.

DATA SHEET

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Case 1: Marvin | Age: 9 yrs. 10 mos. | Grade: 5 | Date tested: 10/63 |
| Case 2: Bryan | Age: 10 yrs. | Grade: 5 | Date tested: 10/63 |

| WECHSLER INTELLIGENCE SCALE FOR CHILDREN | Marvin | Bryan |
|---|---|---|
| | (Scores presented in percentiles) | |
| Verbal Tasks | | |
| General range of information about the world | | |

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| | Marvin | Bryan |
|---|---|---|
| Ability to use this information practical situations. | 98 | 74 |
| Arithmetic reasoning ability. | 91 | 74 |
| Ability to note essential similarities; verbal abstractions. | 91 | 97 |
| Memory for digits, auditory attention, concentration, visual imagery. | 91 | 74 |
| Vocabulary, general cultural and educational level. | 98 | 99+ |
| **Performance Tasks** | | |
| Ability to note details, discriminate between the essential and non essential. | 95 | 99+ |
| Social intelligence or ability to comprehend a social type situation, to comprehend subtleties in interpersonal relations, story sense. | 99+ | 99+ |
| Ability to deal with part-whole situations when goal is known, to handle space abstractly. | 95 | 84 |
| Ability to deal with part-whole situations when goal is not known. | 84 | 91 |
| Ability to learn new task involving speeded hand-eye coordination and visual memory. | 84 | 50 |
| Verbal IQ | 139 | 133 |
| Performance IQ | 133 | 137 |
| Total IQ | 140 | 134 |

| CALIFORNIA READING TEST (Junior High School Level) | | Marvin (Scores reported in grade levels) | Bryan |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reading Vocabulary | | | |
| | Math | 5.0 | 8.3 |
| | Science | 9.0 | 5.5 |
| | Social Science | 6.5 | 6.7 |
| | General | 5.0 | 6.5 |
| | Total Vocab. | 6.7 | 6.8 |
| Reading Comprehension | | | |
| | Following Direct. | 7.0 | 5.0 |
| | Reference Skills | 9.0 | 5.7 |
| | Interpretation Skills | 5.5 | 8.5 |
| | Total Comprehension | 7.5 | 7.5 |
| MICHIGAN SPEED OF READING TEST | | 5.0 | 8.5 |
| DURRELL ORAL READING PARAGRAPHS | | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| VISUAL MEMORY FOR WORDS TEST | | 5.0 | 1.0 |
| PHONIC SPELLING TEST | | 10.0 | 4.0 |
| MORRISON MC CALL SPELLING TEST | | 5.5 | 4.5 |
| NOALL COHEN WORD ANALYSIS TEST | | strong on 5 levels | weak on 3 levels |
| MAIN IDEAS TEST | | 4.0 | 6.5 |
| BENTON VISUAL RETENTION TEST | | negative | poor form low IQ |
| GESELL INCOMPLETE MAN | | negative | hi matur. low vis-motor |
| KEYSTONE TELEBINOCULAR SURVEY | | weak acuity | poor fusion, alternate suppressions |
| MOONEY PROBLEM CHECKLIST, MACHOVER DRAW-A-PERSON, PINTNER PERSONALITY INVENTORY | | negative | emotional; anxiety |

Because Marvin and Bryan scored so high on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), and because the California Reading Test is a relatively easy test for students in the northeast, we used a junior high level instead of an elementary level reading test.

At 135 to 140 IQ, tests become less able to discriminate differences among individuals. In other words, as we get closer to an average IQ, the observed differences in performance are greater. Thus, in comparing the subtest scatters on the WISC, the patterns are not as different as one usually finds between two individuals. Yet, the differences are still striking.

Both boys are above the 98th percentile in overall intelligence. Both have high vocabulary scores, good general information, and good story sense. Both were charming in their relationship with the clinician. Both are sensitive to the subtleties of interpersonal relations.

Marvin is quiet, cooperative, cool, and friendly. He paces himself evenly. Bryan, however, is hyperactive, intense, anxious, and sporadic. He has good general information, but he chokes up in practical application of this information (note second subtest on WISC). His anxiety shows on the memory for digits test. On arithmetic reasoning he had difficulty holding figures in his head. Yet, he is able to compute and can solve arithmetic problems. In his haste, he sometimes adds two plus six and gets nine. Why is he so anxious? Is the low score on the last WISC subtest a clue?

A solid operator, Marvin moves slowly; he never exerts himself, because he is already reading two grade levels above placement. (Both the Durrell and California tests place him grade seven or above). His teacher describes him as a quiet youngster who looks bored with life. The fact of the matter is that Marvin is bored with his teacher. School is no challenge to him. He operates two or three grade levels above his placement without much effort. Actually,

Marvin is a slow reader; visual memory for words is lower than his expectancy. He operates phonically rather than visually. There is nothing wrong with his perceptual processes (Benton and Keystone are negative). His forte lies in basic word attack skills which are very strong (Phonic Spelling, Noall-Cohen test scores). If he wants to use them, Marvin certainly has the skills to spell correctly; he just doesn't care. Main ideas on the California (Interpretation Skills) and on the Main Ideas Test give him trouble.

Bryan, on the other hand, is a main ideas reader—a skimmer (Main Ideas Test, Interpretation Skills on the California). He speeds along 3.5 grade levels above his grade placement (Michigan Speed of Reading Test). He must rely on contextual cues and sheer guts, because he has no word attack skills (Visual Memory for Words Test, Phonic Spelling Test, Morrison McCall Spelling Test, Noall-Cohen Word Analysis Test). Bryan gulps up whole pages and feels out the main ideas.

Marvin plods along slowly, using phonic skills, but often missing the gist of what he reads. Note how much higher Bryan's Interpretation Skills score is compared to Marvin's on the California. Note, also, how low Bryan drops on Reference Skills and Following Direction Skills compared to Marvin. Following directions and reference skills are slow plodding tasks that cannot be skimmed so easily. Marvin can handle this type of skill.

Not shown on the data sheets are breakdowns of the Interpretation Skills on the California. As expected, Bryan scored well on main ideas while he scored less well on questions dealing with specific details. Marrin, on the other hand, had a reverse pattern—high details, low main ideas.

Note some other striking differences. Marvin's math vocabulary is 3.5 grade levels below Bryan's, but he compensates with a high science vocabulary. Bryan's general vocabulary exceeds Marvin's. When scores average out, both come up with the same total vocabulary score.

Generally speaking, Marvin needs to learn main ideas; he needs to learn under pressure of a stop watch. His visual memory for words could improve with a little tachistoscopic training. This might also help him improve his spelling. The Keystone Telebinocular suggests an acuity problem. He should be referred for refraction. Most of all, Marvin needs motivating and challenging. But this motivating must be of a different style from what Bryan needs.

The two boys' personality tests show important differences (Mooney Problem Checklist, Machover DAP, Pintner Personality Inventory and interview with clinician). Marvin has cleverly rebelled against what he perceives as his mother's overbearing authority. In fact, Marvin is very sensitive to all authority. Marvin's reaction is nonviolent resistance. He acquiesces. He floats. He refuses to push. Any aggressive or authoritarian move toward him by his teacher will bring the very opposite reaction we desire from Marvin. The modus operandi for motivating Marvin is seduction. Loading his environment with challenging projects, but waiting patiently for Marvin to make the first move is the best way to motivate him. In other words, the teacher has to play it "cool" with this youngster.

Bryan is in different trouble. The last subtest of the WISC, his Benton, Besell, and Keystone suggest a visual-motor problem. To the examining clinician, Bryan appeared to be a classic case of poor perceptual development. He has concomitant personality problems complicating his situation. Visual-perceptual training, psychological counseling, and remediation in basic word attack skills are advisable. His personality evaluation also reveals a problem with strong pressures from his parents to achieve. Against Marvin's passive resistance, we contract Bryan's frustrating attempts to comply—frustrating because of his visual-perceptual impediment. Unlike Marvin, Bryan needs strong authority in his teacher, but he needs reassuring authority. He needs an authority figure who will accept him and support him regardless of his achievements.

Certainly, there are similarities between Marvin and Bryan:

Both exceed plus two standard deviations in intelligence. Both have oral reading scores two grade levels above placement. Both have similar total reading scores on the California Reading Test. Both are in a classroom designated as homogeneous. To their teacher and counselor, Bryan and Marvin are alike. Before testing, both boys were using the same reading material and were being taught the same way. Worst of all, both were tagged by their teacher and counselor as good achievers even though they are, in fact, retarded readers when we consider their potentials.

But the importance of their differences far outweigh their similarities. Marvin is sluggish and operates in low gear. Something needs to shift him into high. Bryan is operating at break-neck speed. He is already in overdrive, but his gears are slipping. The more they slip, the faster he tries to travel. Bryan needs repairs before the transmission goes or before the motor burns out. Each boy has a different life style. Each one works at a different rate. Each has different interests (note vocabulary strengths and weaknesses). Each boy has different learning needs.

Marvin and Bryan illustrate the need to adjust classroom activities to each individual on four dimensions:

Dimension 1: The content of learning must be tailored to individual needs. Bryan needs training in word attack skills not in main ideas. Marvin needs the latter. Bryan must learn to slow down. Marvin must learn to speed up.

Dimension 2: The level of content must be adjusted to individual needs. Both Bryan and Marvin are precocious youngsters who require reading material above their grade placement. Marvin, in particular, can handle high junior high school material. During remediation, Bryan will be able to handle grade five to seven material.

Dimension 3: The speed of learning differs from person to person. This means that the speed of teaching will have to be adjusted to each pupil.

Dimension 4: The frequency of response must be maximized for each individual if we expect maximum learning. Research tells us that active learning with continuous response to teaching stimuli is necessary for efficient learning. Both Marvin and Bryan must always be responding to teaching stimuli.

How can one teacher with 25 or 30 pupils meet individual needs on all four dimensions?

PART TWO: THE SELF DIRECTED CLASSROOM

Sound methodology is based on precision of definition, perception, and action. Such precision is possible if the teacher thinks operationally. The term reading is not operationally precise. Marvin must be taught to select the appropriate main idea from a list of alternative selections. This is more precise than saying Marvin needs to improve his reading. Bryan needs to learn to auditorily discriminate ble blends at the end of words. This is more precise than saying Bryan needs to improve his reading. Marvin also needs to learn how to write his own statement of the main idea. This is a different operation from selecting from alternatives. Bryan also needs to visually discriminate bl at the beginning of words. This, too, is a different operation from auditory discrimination. Remembering specific details in history texts is different from recalling details in science. Oral recall of details is a different behavior from written recall of the same details. Reading involves hundreds of these specific operations.

The first requirement of effective individualized instruction is to think and operate as a learning specialist by isolating specific operations to be taught. The more specific, the more likely the instruction will be successful.

The second requirement is to develop a core reading program for all pupils, one in which each can move at his own pace. Such a program requires continuous measurement and diagnosis of specific operations. On the basis of this diagnosis, each pupil branches from the core to specific instructional segments according to needs. Marvin would be branched to speeded exercises for main ideas and to tachistoscopic training. Bryan would be branched to the McCall Crabbe exercises for specific details and to word attack skills exercises.

The third requirement is to develop self-teaching, self correcting learning segments and team learning techniques that increase the learner's role, increase frequency of response, and decrease direct teacher intervention. This allows the

learner to move at his own pace in the direction of his needs and interests.

The fourth requirement is for every teacher to train himself in diagnosis and treatment of learning needs. Every elementary school teacher should be an expert in the use of the Gates-McKillop Reading Test kit or the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty as well as the many group tests available. The Gray and Gilmore Oral Reading Tests, as well as some clinical tools such as the Benton Visual Retention, the Keystone Telebinocular or the Ortho-Rater, and simple auditory and speech tests should be part of the elementary school teacher's repertoire.

The fifth requirement is for each teacher to know the materials available in reading, language arts, math, and science. In the past five years, publishers have loaded the market with excellent materials and trade books. Many materials produced for other content areas are excellent tools for teaching reading.

These five requirements are goals for the classroom teacher who continuously strives to improve his methodology and increase his effectiveness. They are practical and realistic goals because we can move <u>now</u> in this direction.

A creative second grade teacher, for example, can select a number of core developmental reading programs, basal systems, Catherine Stern's new structural reading approach, Sullivan Associates Programed beginning reading, a Fernald or Sylvia Ashton Warner technique. The teacher can combine it with tape recorders, self checking answer sheets, and team learning to increase self directed learning. Supplementing the core should be a classroom library of trade books, magazines, workbooks, science, reading kits, paperbacks, and published skill builders. With a little imagination, materials can be stored according to specific operations taught. With a little more imagination, they can be restructured into self teaching, self correcting materials.

For example, any standard workbook can be restructured into self-directing exercises for specific operations. Each exercise can be torn out and mounted on

colored oak tag. The colors can be coded according to skill or level. The answers can be printed on back for immediate feedback. If Bryan has trouble with suffixes, the teacher can refer him to appropriate material for drill work. Bryan can check himself, because the answers are available to him.

Research shows that team learning is more effective in many cases than individual learning. One research shows, for example, that two youngsters working on workbook drills together gain higher achievement scores than one workbook per student.

Let us look at an example of a second grade, self directed, learning classroom. Johnnie has completed a beginning primary reading program. He is working on sight vocabulary and basic phonic skills. One day, Johnnie discovers he cannot write from dictation: "Pat put the bag on the bed." His teacher notices that Johnnie continues to have trouble with medial short vowels. A two-minute spot test confirms the teacher's observations.

The teacher moves Johnnie to a Bell and Howell Language Master on which we have programed a tape-card series on auditory and visual discrimination of medial short vowel sounds. Three other classmates need the same training and work with Johnnie in one corner of the room using headsets to reduce noise and increase concentration. They spend two twenty-minute sessions daily on the program. In two days, two members of the group leave because they have mastered the skill. They work on other needs. Johnnie and a partner continue on a tape recorder programed with teacher-made tapes and accompanying booklets. These are supplemented by exercises from standard workbooks that have been cut up and filed according to specific operations taught in each exercise.

In other parts of the room, students work on other skills. One group reads books they have selected from the classroom library. Some of these students are advanced enough to write short reports about their books. Some will read stories to other students who are not yet independent readers. Four students are

preparing projects in areas of special interest. Six students are working on a language laboratory on which is programed a core developmental reading program. Each student works at an individual level and rate on content matched to his needs and/or interests. Everyone is actively learning. No one is waiting for "his turn." Learning intensity is high.

The room is a hodge podge of activity. Noise level is high. Students move about at will, intent on their individual tasks. Things are <u>not</u> in their places; they are being used. To the untrained eye and to the obsessive-compulsive principal, the self-directed learning classroom is turmoil. Not to the teacher and the students. Through it all floats the teacher, a new type of teacher--one who is creative and comfortable in the midst of individuality--one who is uncomfortable with conformity and over-regimentation. This new teacher knows more about learning than the conventional teacher. This new teacher's job is more complex and challenging:

1. He arranges superior conditions for learning by maintaining a "therapeutic classroom atomsphere" in which students risk behavior change. There is no fear, punishment, or retribution for misdeeds. In a self-directed classroom, each younster is his own judge.

2. He teaches pupils how to teach themselves. His pupils know how to use the materials available to them in the self-directed classroom.

3. He helps insure success by carefully matching materials to needs.

4. He continuously diagnoses, interprets, and evaluates growth with the student. He does not <u>judge</u> his pupils.

5. When materials do not work, when a pupil falters, teacher is on the spot with educational and psychological first aid. There is continuous one-to-one personal interaction between teacher and pupil.

6. He continuously develops new materials to solve new problems.

7. He continuously groups and regroups his students according to needs.

8. He introduces enrichment experiences in small groups or with the entire class.

PART THREE: PSYCHO-SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The self-directed learning classroom need not replace large group instruction. Whatever values exist in a teacher talking to or at 25 pupils at once can still be retained. But in adding to the large group technique a methodology based on individual self instruction or small team learning, we make some important decisions about the type of persons we graduate from our schools.

We do not preach; we practice techniques that promote:

1. Social Responsibility: Team learning thrusts youngsters into real situations in which interdependence is necessary to reach educational goals. There is nothing contrived here. Learning teams are not formed to promote social learning. Their value is in learning academic skills. One of the by-products of such a technique, however, is social learning. I prefer the real to the vicarious learning experience. It is more subtle and potent because it is not artificial.

2. Personal Responsibility: Self directing, self correcting learning experiences require the individual to make decisions. He must teach himself. The pupil is not in an unstructured environment. Like most areas of our daily lives, this is a highly structured environment. But within the structure is the provision for adequate amounts of self direction.

Positive self direction and decision making are two characteristics of maturity. Producing mature individuals is one of the school's goals. Yet, under present methodology, education contributes to the "social prolongation of infancy" by spoon feedings, tight schedules, restrictions, dormitory curfews, etc. From K through graduate and professional school, students are told what, when, how much, and by what means to read. I have never accustomed myself to the

look of panic on the faces of my college students right up to the doctoral level when I refuse to assign a required textbook for a course. I usually present an annotated reading list and guide to reading. My instructions are to read as many or as few books and articles they feel they can in the light of their own needs, available time, and interests. In a few weeks, the panic usually turns to open hostility in what is obviously a pure case of projection. Most of these students have never had an option on their own education, and by the time they have spent more than fifteen years in American schools, the desire to be master of their own reading destiny has been extinguished. The frightening issue here is how much of their total existence follows the same pattern.

Social-Personal Development: In a program geared to individual needs, the youngster perceives himself as successful. Each step fits his level and rate. Probability of success is increased. Furthermore, he recognizes around him the variability of strenghts and weaknesses. In the self directed classroom, individuality is an existent reality, not a glittering generality.

The student experiences his own worth. Materials and methods are matched to him, not he to them. With everyone working at his own pace on his own needs, he can devote time to some of his special interests--to what we call "pupil specialties." They become part of the classroom routine. Suddenly, his interests are important to the school which is the power culture's agent. It is as if the culture were saying to the individual, "We recognize and respect your uniqueness."

Rewards and Satisfactions: The focus of the model program is on intrinsic rewards. Teachers talk abundantly to their students about the evils of materialism. But these same teachers hold extrinsic rewards over their students' heads as enticements to achieve: grades, honors, prizes, special priviledges, etc. In the self-directed classroom, success in achievement is its own reward. The self-directed classroom offers the school the distinction of being the only social

institution to revitalize this noble ideal. The possible social consequences are certainly worth the educational effort to decrease extrinsic reinforcement and promote intrinsic reward.

General Hostility and Negative Behaviors: If theories of individual and social behaviors are valid, negatively reinforced behaviors affect the total personality in areas beyond the specific behavior being learned. The "social by-products" of constant negative reinforcement are hostility and, in general, negative behaviors throughout the entire personality. The self-directed classroom uses positive reinforcement and avoids these negative social by-products.

Frustration Tolerance: When the school provides an atmosphere in which a youngster can succeed, it helps to build in the personality a backlog of success that will compensate for occasional failures. In culturally deprived areas, the public school could become, if it developed the methodological style of the self-directed classroom, the only major social force dedicated to the building of success reserves in a population that usually experiences failure, rejection, and disapproval. Some juvenile delinquency that concerns us in disadvantaged areas is the end result of this frustration.

Control of Destiny: One of the salient characteristics of culturally deprived youngsters (and oldsters) is the attitude of futility. This characteristic cuts across social class, for it cleverly hides behind split-level facades in suburbia. In a self-directing learning process, the individual can become partial master of his educational destiny. The school has an obligation to give every individual the chance to taste this mastery.

CONCLUSION:

I think the great contribution of progressive education of the 1930's was its stress on the whole child. More than anything else, the progressives showed us that a total organism sits in our classroom. I think progressive education's

greatest weakness was its inability to implement it goals. Somewhere between theory and practice, learning to read and write got relegated to secondary priority, and the psycho-social development of the child became the principal goal.

This is certainly a crucial goal, but it is not the unique function of the school. The principal job of the school is to teach youngsters to read and write. No other social institution has that unique task. Psycho-social development is another task of the school, but one which the school shares with the family, church, mental health organizations, and community workers. That the principles of good mental health are consistent with optimum conditions for learning is a fact. Our job as learning specialists is to find those techniques consistent with good mental health to promote efficient learning of reading and writing.

To do this, we must teach individuals, not masses of bodies. If we teach masses we must accept the consequences--unfulfilled youngsters in Chicago's Black Belt, or in the littered alleys of Puerto Rican New York. If we teach masses, we must be satisfied with bland, conforming hollow men who escape from their offices to passionless, split-level, push-button, television worlds.

If we choose, instead, to teach individuals, then we must start immediately to create the materials, and the teacher know-how to reach individuals with a 25-1 pupil-teacher ratio. By we, I mean every teacher, for the responsibility lies not with publishers, principals, or colleges. It lies with every sensitive, professional, classroom teacher who cares enough about his pupils.